



# THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

## OFFICE OF THE CAMPUS PRINCIPAL

Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Clement Sankat, *BSc (UWI), MSc (UWI), PhD (Guelph), FIAGR, CEng, FAPETT*

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### Remarks by the Campus Principal

#### UWI Symposium on Research, Enterprise and Impact – Opening Ceremony

*(An Event of The UWI Research Expo 2013)*

Learning Resource Centre, UWI St. Augustine

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2013 1.00pm

### **NOTE TO ALL READERS: PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

#### **Salutations**

- Vice Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, Professor E. Nigel Harris
- Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, the Honourable Raziah Ahmed
- Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, Ms. Angela Sinaswee-Gervais
- Other Representatives of the Government
- Chairman of Campus Council, UWI St. Augustine, Mr. Ewart Williams
- Pro Vice Chancellor, Research, The University of the West Indies, Professor Wayne Hunte
- Other UWI Pro Vice Chancellors and UWI Campus Principals,
- University Registrar , University Bursar and other members of UWI Executive Management

- Deputy Principal, Professor Rhoda Reddock, and members of Senior Management
- University and Campus Librarian, Ms. Jennifer Joseph
- Deans, Deputy Deans, Campus Coordinator for Graduate Studies and Research
- Vice President for Human and Corporate Relations of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd., Mrs. Cassandra Patrovani-Sylvester
- Staff and Students of the UWI St. Augustine Campus
- Specially Invited Guests
- Members of the Media

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- Good afternoon to all!
  
- My job today as Campus Principal is quite straightforward. In fact, this is one of the few times I can say this, as so often it can be complex, demanding and indeed challenging. But this afternoon is different – not only because we are hosting a Symposium on a topic I feel very passionately about, but also because we have some of the best minds of our country and region right here in this room! So I have no doubt that by the end of this Symposium, it would be clear to all, the valuable contribution that the UWI St. Augustine Campus and our UWI have made and continues to make to our society, through the hard work of dedicated researchers across our seven Faculties.

- The work speaks for itself! In fact, a recent analysis of the performance of the GORTT projects approved between 2006 and 2009 showed that the 48 projects reviewed had a number of achievements – more than 136 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 7 books, 12 book chapters and other scholarly outputs like MPhil/Ph.D. students trained, the attraction of new, additional external funding etc. Good research attracts more support. Our analysis also revealed that UWI St. Augustine researchers who received GORTT grants were producing comparable academic outputs with considerable less research funding. For example, in the US and Canada, estimates of 0.57 and 0.92 publications per US\$100,000 have been reported. We have found that from the previous GORTT grants, we achieved 8.5 papers per US\$100,000 spent. This is a very noteworthy accomplishment that is testament to the resourcefulness/innovativeness and productivity of our researchers. It also speaks to spending on Research & Development in the developed countries, and the real pittance that is spent here and in the Region! But today’s Symposium on “Research, Enterprise and Impact” is about much more than that! It is about the UWI St. Augustine Campus’ contribution to society, to advancing national and regional development. And I know that the presentations to come will allow that contribution to shine through!

- Distinguished guests, the mission of the university in contemporary Caribbean society has become more diverse and all-encompassing over the decades. It includes teaching, learning, innovation, entrepreneurship, consultancy services, knowledge transfer, public engagement, etc. But the central pillar that remains constant is the university's commitment to the creation and dissemination of knowledge and its responsibility to society. Whether it is perceived as a commitment to "*develop the life of the mind*" (Saiydain 1965), "*the spirit of truth*" (Badat 2010), "*a culture of conscience*" (Scott 2003), "*democratic citizenship*" or "*the cultivation of humanity*" (Nussbaum 2006), all previously written about society looks to the university to "uphold and transmit the norms, values, attitudes and ethics that are the foundation of strong democracies, healthy civil societies and cohesive cultures" (World Bank 2002). This is a major responsibility! It is not one that can be curtailed or overlooked even in times of financial austerity. Building "the human and social capital of our country and region and creating the knowledge and understanding of ourselves, our environment, our investments that can take us on a positive development path while creating better, more sustainable societies".
- This is why, as Campus Principal, I am so passionate about knowledge, about research and about protecting the autonomy and the financial ability of tertiary institutions of higher education to conduct research; and research across a range

of areas – the humanities, law, natural sciences, medical sciences, social sciences, engineering, agriculture! While directed research is also important to provide specific solutions through research application as we have been supporting through the Research Scheme of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (2006-09) and the more recently created Research and Development Impact Fund, there must be a balance in order to support intellectual freedom and scholarly inquiry, hallmarks of great Universities.

- We must be careful not to let current trends in the market economy cause us to view knowledge exclusively as a commodity, or to let donor funding skew research agendas too much in a particular direction. For while this may contribute to economic development, it could at the same time create gaps and imbalances in the broader knowledge base of the society. This goes against the very essence of the mission of a university! At the UWI St. Augustine Campus we are very cognizant of this. This is why it was not until after much consultation with our staff, students and stakeholders, that we arrived at a consensus on the 6 priority thematic areas of the RDI Fund, which would be relevant and responsive to national and regional development and at the same time, allow room for scholarly inquiry. For this, I thank the Professors on my Campus.

- Jamil Salmi, when he visited us last year, reminded us that building a world class university requires 3 main components: steady finances, great talent and good governance; all three are equally important. In all that we do at the UWI St. Augustine Campus, we have kept this firmly in our minds. As we advance the Research and Innovation pillar of our UWI Strategic Plan, we continue to work at building researcher capacity, staff and student engagement, increased dissemination of knowledge, dedicated funding for research, and recognition of our outstanding researchers through forums such as this one, and our Research Awards Ceremony held just last year.
- However, while other universities, for example in the UK and the US, are focusing on research and research impact from a measurement perspective, looking at quantitative metrics for research outputs, research productivity and research impact, we at UWI St. Augustine have chosen to focus on impact and metrics, yes, but more so to focus on **people and processes**. Academic impact is a natural consequence of outstanding scholarship – peer-reviewed journal articles, publications, citations, thesis, high level graduates etc. **but transformative change in society can only come about through stakeholder engagement and adopting the mindset and methodologies that help to ground the work of a researcher in the reality of specific groups in society.** Research *for* development.

- So while we encourage our researchers to excel and to publish in internationally-recognized, high-impact journals, we must also encourage our own regional academic journals and publishing houses, ensuring also rigour in their standards. While we support scientific investigation, we must not ignore the importance of the university as a space for unbridled intellectual debate to inform public opinion; as a repository of indigenous knowledge about the Caribbean; and as an institution that cultivates a sense of civic responsibility among citizens.
- As the President of Harvard University, Drew Faust, once said, “*an overly instrumental model of the university misses the genius of its capacity*”. It misunderstands the nature of the enterprise. We do not wish to make this mistake. We must allow also for freedom to explore, to discover. So this afternoon, we will showcase the impact of our research in a very broad sense. And while the mission of universities internationally may be dynamic, complex and continuously evolving, the UWI St. Augustine Campus is steadfast in its commitment to research and knowledge creation and dissemination. This is a central component of our university’s mission and one that must be preserved at all cost!

**PAUSE**

- This Symposium on Research, Enterprise and Impact would not have been possible today, were it not for the hard work, dedication and support of several individuals and organizations. To this end, I would first like to extend heartfelt thanks to the Hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, the Ministry and its staff and the government of Trinidad and Tobago for its continued support for our Campus. We appreciate this level of support for Research & Development. And to the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago for their generous sponsorship of our Research Expo 2013! NGC has demonstrated to Trinidad & Tobago that they value research and scholarship in advancing a society. Thanks, President Indar Maharaj and the Board of Management. I would also like to extend special thanks to our moderators, discussants and presenters who readily agreed to participate in this Symposium to share their research, experience and expertise with our wider Campus community. To my own colleagues in the Office of the Campus Principal, led by Mrs. Stacy Kennedy and her Team, thank you, I know that you have all worked diligently to organize this Symposium amidst an extremely hectic week! But you have done this, because you all feel passionately about what you do. We are breaking new ground here at the UWI and yes in Trinidad & Tobago in terms of the management of this small Research & Development Fund.

- Distinguished guests – at the end of this Symposium and more broadly our Research Expo week of activities, it is my hope that you will not only learn more about the very interesting research being conducted across our Campus, but you would also wish to partner with us on different research initiatives that are relevant to the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean region! In so doing, collectively we can truly be of service and have an impact on the people of our country and region!
- Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you!